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CHILDREN AND THEIR PROPERTY

Parents have no scruples about appropriating anything a child may have, or about treating it carelessly at the same time that they admit the child's ownership of the property. This is in marked contrast to the rigidly scrupulous attitudes of some other nonliterate peoples such as certain American Indian tribes. Repeatedly I gave children small gifts, ranging from candy to a tin container, only to see these gifts in the hands of an adult a few minutes later, while the child stood by without source of redress. One of the major difficulties in using free-play techniques was that adults could not be kept from joining the children and appropriating the toys. As young people begin producing or acquiring property of greater value in adult eyes, this situation becomes more acute. (See Chapter 6.) A quarrel between two boys over a bow illustrates several aspects of this situation.

Pudding, a boy of about fourteen, gave his bow to an uncle, who promised to mend it for him. When it was mended, the uncle handed the bow to his son instead of returning it to his nephew. The son in turn loaned it to a playmate, who broke it beyond repair. When the nephew discovered what had happened he went to the house of the boy who had broken the bow and seized his bow in compensation—a thoroughly adult procedure. The two boys came to blows and soon both were bellowing with rage and pain. Adults took a hand in separating them and suggested various compromises, which the enraged boys both stubbornly refused to accept. Adult relatives became sufficiently excited to begin snatching the bow from each other's hands. At this point two neutral observers rushed in, seized the bow, and broke it into pieces.

Fenton the Interpreter, who was one of the two neutral observers, commented afterward that they would not have dared to break the bow in this fashion if two adults had been quarrelling, but instead everyone would have taken sides and tried to settle matters by compromise. Trivial as this incident is, it illustrates not only the helplessness of children in protecting their own property, but also the peculiar harshness toward growing children that manifests itself repeatedly in teasing, ridiculing, frightening, and beating, as well as in a certain contemptuous lightheartedness where their property interests are concerned.

As harshness may take the form of confiscating children's property, so solicitude may manifest itself in giving them gifts. A minor gift of meat in the name of boys at feasts has already been mentioned. The loincloth, the symbol of status, is another gift children receive from

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design is first traced on her forehead or cheek and is then pricked in with a thorn dipped in charcoal. The procedure usually draws a number of girls and adult women, all of whom discuss animatedly which of a limited number of simple designs will be used. Often a little girl who has taken no initiative in the matter will be urged by a friend or adult to undergo the operation. Beauty is the only objective.

It is a tradition to insist that the operation does not hurt, and when asked a girl who had just had the task completed whether it was painful, older women answered before she was able to, assuring me that it was not. On one occasion some older women, by way of teasing the child's grandmother, urged a little girl of seven to let herself be tattooed. The grandmother arrived just in time to prevent the scheme from being carried out. She was very indignant that her grandchild should have been cajoled into it when she was obviously so young. In relation to a discussion of skills and craftsmanship which will come later, it should be stated that the tattooing process is often very crude and usually impermanent, so that traces of designs are rarely distinguishable on the faces of middle-aged women.

GROWING UP FOR BOYS

Whereas girls are tattooed from approximately ten to fourteen, the comparable badge of adulthood for boys, i.e., long hair, does not come until somewhat later, at ages I should estimate from sixteen to eighteen. When boys begin to let their hair grow long, they also begin borrowing or acquiring male accoutrements. These are dwelt upon in loving detail in many myths and consist of a sword, a front shield, a back shield, a parrying shield, a bow, a wide belt of woven rattan that serves as a quiver, an arrow basket with bells, and the tubular, cross-bark hair cylinder with the accompanying combs and head plumes. Naturally, a young man rarely succeeds in borrowing or acquiring all these articles at first, but he gets as many as he can and struts about in them, often followed by the half-admiring, half-derisive comments of older women and girls. There is a special expression for the type of laughter that women direct toward a young man, which I can translate only by our word *hoot*. Its character is as unmistakable as the laughter that accompanies the telling of smutty jokes in our culture. A young man of about twenty himself described to the following words this attitude and the associated courting interests of both boys and girls.

"When a lot of women get together to work in the fields or to fetch water, they talk and talk. When you hear them hoot, that means they are talking about a man. Maybe one girl says she likes a certain man and [illegible] to play with him

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sur 322 360 towards to sleep with him. When a young man ties up his long hair and walks with bells on his basket, women watch until he has passed by, and then they say, 'Isn't that a fine man!' and begin to hoot. If he wears a big white shawl from the coast, women will say, 'There goes my white chicken!' and then they hoot. The young man feels glad but also a little ashamed. Also, when a young man begins to versify at a dance and his voice rings out clear and strong, the next day the women will say, 'Don't we have a fine man in our village!' and then they will hoot. When there is a dance, the young man will hunt for areca and betel the day before so as to fill up his basket. When he reaches the dance place on the night of the dance, all the young women will crowd around him and hold out their hands for areca. If one woman comes back again and again for more areca, it is a sign that they already want each other, and soon they will go off and make an agreement. Then the girl says he must go find her bride-price."

352 This comment sets, better than any outsider could, the pattern of masculine vanity, which often persists through life and which is recognized as a male trait. Consistent with this newly developed swagger, other changes occur in young men's lives. In the course of a few months they break away from the irresponsible free-roving play groups of growing boys and become far more solitary and sedentary. They imitate the indolence of older wealthy men. At the same time, they begin to speculate about the possibilities and the means for entering the financial system of the adults and about ways of ingratiating themselves with men of influence who may be of assistance to them. The whole question of entering financial activities will be discussed presently in connection with marriage.

352 One significant detail concerning food should be noted in connection 417 with the coming of age in boys. The picture so far of the development 424 of masculine vanity and the good-natured teasing that it involves is thoroughly familiar to us. There is another and comparable source of teasing. Boys who are beginning to show open interest in girls and to visit the village of someone they find attractive will be teased by older people with comments like the following, "Padama has gone to visit his wife in Kwiera. When boys grow up, the food their mother cooks no longer tastes good. They have to go to the house of a young woman to eat." This kind of teasing makes the younger boys squirm with embarrassment much as it would in our society. A few years later a young man 349 will insist on a middday meal, even if he has to cook it himself, as a symbol 360 of the adult status he is struggling to acquire. The extent to which 353 food and courting ideas can be linked is also exemplified in the follow-

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tim. Such ties are within the range of possibility but do not appear to be modal.

One of the interesting aspects of early married life in Atimelang is that the woman, once mutual residence has been established, quite often refuses her husband sexual privileges. This refusal is often phrased in terms of still unsatisfactory financial payments to her kinsmen, so that men have another opportunity to link wealth with sex and sexual frustration. However, if we may trust the autobiographies, men may also on occasion show considerable reluctance to enter into sexual relationships. Ripuda's and Maleleka's autobiographies both point to such episodes. In consonance with such an attitude is the fact that most men whom engaged in elaborate feast finances are continent and even sleep in the male guesthouses or on their own verandahs. The acquisition of wealth can be pursued successfully only at the expense of sexual gratification. It should be stated parenthetically that some women, as well as their husbands, believe that they are lucky rather than unlucky in relation to "pulling in gongs and monies," so that continence is not required of their husbands to ensure success in financial transactions.

On the part of women the unwillingness to enter immediately into sexual intimacies with their husbands, or at least the existence of that traditional attitude, may be explicable in part by the very early marriages they frequently contract. The first sign of swelling breasts is considered the token of a girl's readiness for adult sexual life. First menses are considered irrelevant, and some women told me of having borne children before their periods set in.* Not every girl, of course, marries so young, but there is no doubt that marriage does come much earlier in life for girls than for boys. This means that their period of sociological adolescence is much briefer and certainly in comparison to boys socially much less trying.

The attitude of men toward young wives varies considerably, although again opinion is weighted in favor of young women. Of course the matter is relative. In the case of Atamau, previously cited, his overt objection was that the girl was too young to enter into sexual relations. The chief of Atimelang, who then bought the girl, said that it was better to get a very young girl so that she could be trained to docility and industry. A man from Dikiraps was very dubious of the whole affair and said somewhat scornfully that in his village they did not believe in marrying children. Ripuda, whose autobiography is included in this volume, was of the opinion that an older woman, who thought only of her fields and had already learned to work, was more desirable as a

* The menopause is treated in an equally casual manner.

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607 simply a woman was able to assert herself in terms of her real power as a
562 provider quite apart from financial status or kinship authority.

The power of women as opposed to that of men is less rigidified by
593 status requirements. It may leave a weak-willed woman in conflict. A
562 determined woman, however, has greater liberty in placing her allegiance where she will. An anecdote in the autobiography of Kabaghaleta gives such a case (page 404). Her husband was repudiated by his brother. She was free either to repudiate him also or to offer him the support of her own village and kinsmen. She chose the latter course. The husband could not but have felt the degree to which he was dependent
562 on his wife. Women's in-group loyalties and status obligations are less fixed than those of men. To a self-assured person this might give freedom. To an insecure person this might heighten a sense of bewilderment. Since the basic childhood training of Atimelang girls inculcates very little more in the way of internal resources than is done for boys, we should not expect women to be notably more constructive than men, even in the face of greater freedom of choice in certain areas. Test data substantiate this reasoning.

CONCLUSIONS

● 372 A number of points may be drawn together by way of summary for
562 this chapter. Boys have a longer and more difficult sociologic adoles-
35 cence than girls because they must enter the financial system. Their experiences and knowledge in that field may well be such as to reinforce the impression of uncertainty and inconsistency secured in connection with disciplines in childhood. Their search in marriage is for
[37] sexual gratification, for a provider, and for status both in wealth and in children. They seek in their wives a mother-provider, a role that women have been ill equipped to fulfill. Girls have had a more purposive training in childhood for adult roles although the administration of disciplines has been as inconsistent for them as it has been for boys. Their sociologic adolescence is brief, and they may undertake the sexual aspects of marriage unwillingly. In addition, marriage means for women far
512 greater economic responsibilities in a social system that does not grant them status recognition equal to that of men, while at the same time it places on them greater and more unnecessary burdens of labor. For women complete adult status through childbearing is not rewarded socially; it is to an extent penalized in that it adds to labor and responsibilities. The important role of women is covertly recognized but not overtly. There is little in the way of cultural rewards (except posthumous remembrance in the form of death feasts) to make them want to

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It is likely that these opportunities for both sensual and sex activity prevent the aggressions of early childhood from reaching explosive forms later.

It is not likely that the suppression imposed on overt forms of aggression or the gradual diminution in the use of obscene words injures the child in any way. However, it must be noted that the self-esteem of the child is in no way improved over what it was earlier in childhood; it still remains low. The child must still have the idea that it is a supernumerary, that it is of no account, for only grudgingly is the boy permitted to participate on the fringes of adult male activity. In this respect the position of the girl is distinctly better, but for reasons that we shall presently see, the prejudices accumulated in childhood do not make the maternal role acceptable to her.

ADOLESCENCE, MARRIAGE, AND SEX

From this point on, the basic personality structure of the males and females must be considered separately.

Induction into adulthood for the boy is not accompanied by any severe puberty rites to mark the introduction of new and serious restrictions. It is not infrequently the case in societies where puberty rites are severe that the boy is compelled to surrender certain advantages of immaturity and is given new ones that he heretofore did not enjoy. As a matter of fact, in Alor puberty does not introduce the boy to any strikingly new experience; on the contrary, it is the beginning of a long and arduous struggle for the achievement of manhood. The success of this achievement is vested largely in the father, who by virtue of his control over property—or of the opportunities for gaining control over it—can indefinitely delay the boy's entrance into manhood. Nor is there any necessity for binding the child to any rigid sexual taboos; these are left in the same status as in early childhood, that is to say, sexuality, as such, is permitted, but gaining status by marriage is rigidly under control. The theoretical advantage of free sexual play is thus actually canceled. The situation eventually arises where the father actually interferes, not with sexual gratification or the opportunities therefor, but with admission to the status of marriage. (See Chart III.)

In relation to his father the boy continues to operate under a system of coercions without rewards, notwithstanding the fact that the power of the father is only relative and the actual control of the subsistence economy is largely in the hands of the women. The status of the father becomes the cardinal objective of the boy.

In order to evaluate the boy's approach to a wife we must see those intrapersonal systems which have already been formed by the time he

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153 of shame, which is really an external agent, and the sense of guilt, which depends upon the internalization of the good parental image, the security of which is maintained by the hope of being reinstated into parental grace. In this latter the young man has had exceedingly poor experience.

542 One final point must be mentioned in connection with the masculine
154 ego ideal. The dependency upon the woman is all too well known. Hence the playing up of masculinity by exaggerating the importance of male financial activities is largely a way of denying dependency upon the woman.

● 543 The induction of the female into adulthood is much easier and is
155 accompanied by fewer necessities for changes in attitude, and by fewer conflicts. Here too we must review the experience of the mother and her resentment of the maternal role, which she is prematurely asked to
557 undertake with the younger siblings. She will not be inclined to give children what she herself did not get. Her wish to abandon herself sexually to the man is filled with internal resistance. Likewise there is resentment at bearing children and caring for them, a fact that leads to two consequences, frequency of abortions and maternal neglect of children. This really completes the cycle. As far as the feminine ego ideal is concerned, the masculine role seems decidedly preferable. It is devoid of the arduous responsibilities and the actual hard labor that go with being a wife and a mother. (See Chart IV.)

532 Under these conditions it is not difficult to understand why it is that the female so frequently takes the aggressive role sexually. Actually this aggression by the female is largely through default on the part of the
551 male. Secondly, the status of marriage is, notwithstanding its hardships, infinitely more desirable to the woman than would be the state of spinsterhood. If the role of wife is accepted, the woman has some compen-
558 sations. She can actually dominate the male by threatening the withdrawal of food, and she can exercise a powerful check upon his infidelities by making the financial obligations associated with libidinous infinitely greater. As we have said before, the whole financial arrangement in connection with marriage acts as a powerful check in keeping the teetering structure of relations between the sexes in some kind of balance.

575 It is difficult to formulate any opinion about the attitude of the woman toward her father, and no conclusive picture emerges of her reactions to her possible importance in his financial schemes. From it she may derive some sense of importance. There is little evidence to prove one way or another the nature of the infantile attachment to the father.

how I had gnawed through the cord and run away, and she said the corp was hers. She told me I could not eat her garden any more, and if I wanted to eat gardens I had better go to my father's. She herself got the corn.

All this time I was living with Abrokoma. Abrokoma's wife, Tikoma, said I had better go work at Bonsaso, where my father's garden was. So I went there to eat the garden. The first year I got a hundred bundles of maize and sold them in Libreseseng and bought a knife. The next year I got only forty bundles, the year after only thirty, the year after only twenty. Then I stopped working there. [Question.] Mother and father lived together all this time. [How many years did you live with your grandparents?] Four years. [Then?] Then I returned to live with my mother and father. At this time I had a friend called Fwamoh. We used to shoot at a banana trunk target. When Fwamoh hit the target every time, I would beat him over the head with a bow. When I hit the target every time, he would hit me over the head with a bow. We were always quarrelling. Then we said we had better stop target shooting. We stopped being friends, and I made friends with Abakomem. I threw out Fwamoh. I was maybe twelve or thirteen at this time.

Abakomi made a house in the fields. His mother was dead. Young men and women gathered there. Girls and boys planned whom they would marry. They slept together in this house. The house was near the Limbeng section. We played there for three years. I stayed there and didn't live with my mother and father. There were many gardens there and enough to eat.

After we had been there awhile I said, "We play only with women and do not think of anything else. Let us think of collecting a bride-price. We had better cut a new rice field and sell the rice for maize and thus accumulate a bride-price." We planted a rice field but our only four baskets fell. Mokogoto came there and asked how much we had and we said twenty gallons [i.e., four baskets holding about five gallons each]. I left my rice there and mother and father ate it. I left for Awoi to cut fields. The first year I planted beans and we harvested four cans. There were twenty-six cans of rice. Of this I got two cans of beans and twelve of rice. One can of beans I carried back here and gave my mother. For three years I cut a garden in Awoi and also here. I travelled back and forth. I sold my rice for a Tumunu [4-english cedis]. I brought the Tumunu here and father gave it to other people, giving me a Mankagumah [10-english cedis] in exchange for it.

When I had this cedis, Kobina's family accused me of sleeping with